

thousands of others like them each year. The United States can help stop it. It is a moral issue.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The assistant majority leader.

REMEMBERING ALAN DIXON

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, yesterday at 6 p.m. on Capitol Hill there was a gathering at a nearby restaurant known as The Monocle. It was a gathering of former staffers of U.S. Senator Alan Dixon of Illinois. They picked The Monocle because he would have picked it. It was his favorite place on Capitol Hill. And it was a sad day, because Senator Dixon passed away Sunday morning in Fairview Heights, IL.

His staff gathered at The Monocle the next day, which would have been his birthday, to toast him and to pay tribute to a great boss, a great friend, and a great Senator from the State of Illinois.

Senator Dixon passed away in his sleep in the early hours on Sunday morning. His son Jeff had dropped him off at home, and he was there with his wife Jody when he passed away. So instead of celebrating his birthday on Monday, we had a day of remembrance of an extraordinary public servant for the State of Illinois.

Alan Dixon used to be known in political circles as Al the Pal, and he loved it. It really described him. For him, friendship and loyalty were everything. It showed in his life and, I think, was a great part of his success.

He was a person who gloried in representing Illinois. He never harbored any national ambitions. Being a Senator from Illinois was his goal in life. He reached it and performed so well as Senator that he is fondly remembered by many who served with him in the House and in the Senate.

He represented an old-school style of politics. He believed in his heart that people of good will could find common ground if they worked at it. He knew how to make this government work, how to make this Senate work, and work for the State of Illinois.

In his memoir, which he published last year, he wrote:

Generally speaking, my political career was built on good will and accommodation.

He was known by Senators on both sides of the aisle as a friendly, helpful, articulate, and effective colleague.

He was a downstate guy in our State. He grew up in Belleville and St. Clair County, not too far away from my hometown of East St. Louis. He grew up just across the river from the great city of St. Louis. His dad owned and ran the Dixon Wine and Liquor Company in Belleville.

Alan served in World War II, in the U.S. Navy Air Corps. After the war, he went to the University of Illinois where they had a special arrangement for vets to earn a bachelor's degree. He went for a short time to the University of Illinois Law School and then, when

his dad's business was struggling, he transferred to Washington University Law School where he graduated second in his class.

In 1948, at the age of 21, a neighbor said: Alan, I have been watching you and I think you ought to consider running for police magistrate in Belleville, IL. Alan hadn't even graduated from law school, and his friend reminded him you didn't have to be a lawyer to be a police magistrate in those days. So he ran and he won.

Two years later, after getting out of law school and passing the bar, both in Missouri and Illinois, he was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives—the youngest member ever elected to the Illinois General Assembly. His starting salary: \$3,000.

He went on to become one of the most successful vote-getters in the history of the State of Illinois. He won 29 consecutive bids for public office, for State representative, State senator, secretary of state, and state treasurer. During one of those races, he carried all 102 counties in Illinois, all 30 townships in Cook County, and all 50 wards. That is a record I don't think anybody will ever break.

When he served in Springfield, IL, as a State representative and a State senator, he did a lot of things, but he pointed with pride to his passage of a constitutional change in Illinois to finally modernize our judiciary. He remembered his days as police magistrate and thought our system of justice had to be brought into the 20th century. Alan Dixon of Belleville, IL, led that effort—an enormous political lift. He got it done. He was effective. People trusted him and they respected him.

He led an unpopular fight against loyalty oaths during the McCarthy era, and he helped create the Illinois college system.

In 1980, the people of Illinois chose Alan Dixon to represent them here in the Senate. He teamed up with his old friend a couple years later who had joined him in the Illinois General Assembly, his seatmate in the Assembly, a man named Paul Simon. Senator Dixon and then-Congressman Paul Simon, soon to be Senator Paul Simon, were colleagues and buddies and business partners. What an unlikely duo. There was Paul Simon who might be persuaded once in a blue moon to drink a little glass of wine, and there was Alan Dixon who loved that cold beer that he grew up with in Belleville, IL. But the two of them were fast friends. I witnessed that friendship over the years. I didn't see the early days when they owned newspapers together—Paul was a newspaper man and Alan more an investor—but I did witness the political part of that friendship, and it was amazing to see.

There were moments in their lives when the two of them could have clashed over their political ambitions, but they always worked it out. They were always friends, and that made a big difference in both of their lives.

It was Alan Dixon as Senator who came up with an idea that had never been tried before in Illinois: He decided to try to get all of the members of the Illinois congressional delegation—Democrats and Republicans—together for lunch on a regular basis. Well, he had to persuade a few of the oldtimers who weren't really open to the idea, but it was his personality and his determination that got it done, a tradition which continues to this day.

In his 12 years in the Senate, Alan Dixon didn't forget where he came from. He remembered growing up in a family of modest means in Belleville. He remembered those tough summer jobs—and there were plenty of them. And he never forgot the working people he represented in St. Clair County and across the State of Illinois.

Alan was at the top of his game and in the strongest voice when it came to standing up for working people and the little guy. He fought for affordable housing and lending practices. He denounced wasteful spending and created a procurement czar to oversee spending at the Pentagon.

One of the things which he is remembered for as a Senator was deciding to personally test a new weapons system. They sent him down to test the Sergeant York gun. They put him in a helmet and sat him on the gun. He was going to test it and fire it, and he soon discovered the gun was a dud—it couldn't shoot straight. He came back and reported it to his colleagues in the Senate, including Senator Sam Nunn, and they went along with Senator Dixon and said: We are going to junk this project. It is a waste of taxpayers' money.

It was Alan Dixon who called for tougher oversight of the savings and loan industry and vigorous prosecution of scam artists who defrauded S&Ls and left taxpayers holding the bag.

In 1992, Alan lost his bid for reelection to the Senate in a hotly contested three-way primary. It was the political upset of the year. It isn't often around here that a Senator would lose in a primary race for reelection—and a lot of people were wondering, his first political loss, how would it affect Alan Dixon.

Election night, Alan stood up and gave the most heartfelt, touching speech I can ever remember of a person who lost a campaign. It was repeated over and over that he was a real gentleman, and his words that he had to say even in defeat added to his reputation as a fine, honest, great public servant. A tearful crowd listened as he said he had “loved every golden moment” of his time in politics.

His fellow Democratic Senators had twice unanimously elected him to serve as chief deputy whip. After his loss in that election and then retirement, he was praised on the floor of the Senate by not only Ted Kennedy and George Mitchell but Bob Dole and Strom Thurmond as well.

In 1995, his public life was resumed when President Clinton appointed Alan

Dixon to chair the base closure commission known as the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission. It made sense. As a Senator, Alan Dixon had written the section of the Defense authorization bill that created the BRAC.

Here was a man who had spent his entire career making political friends, but now he took on a job that was bound to test some of those friendships. He accepted that assignment because the President asked, and Dixon knew it was right for America. It was the same decision he made when he enlisted to serve in World War II.

Last October, Alan Dixon published his memoirs with the appropriate title "The Gentleman From Illinois." He returned to Washington briefly with Jody and members of the family to head on over to his favorite Capitol Hill restaurant, The Monocle. It is about a stone's throw from the Dirksen Senate Office Building where he used to have his old meetings in his office. The Monocle was the place where, afterwards, you joined for bipartisan dinners and a lot of good times.

Alan Dixon told his old friends gathered at The Monocle that evening:

What this country needs now is more friends on the Hill working together and talking together, and working for solutions that will serve the interest of the public.

Well, Alan Dixon was right about that. I hope that some day, in his memory, we will see the return of that spirit in this Senate Chamber. This country truly needs to work together.

Before Dixon left the Senate, then-Senator Paul Simon praised him with these words:

In generations to come, his children, his grandchildren, and his great-grandchildren will look back and say with pride, "Alan Dixon was my father, my grandfather, my great-grandfather," whatever that relationship will be.

Those words by Paul Simon about his lifelong political friend and colleague Alan Dixon ring true today as we reflect not only on his service as a Senator and public official but also as a person.

I lost a pal when Alan Dixon passed away. My wife and I extend our condolences to Alan's wife of 60 years, Jody. What a sweetheart of a woman. People don't realize what spouses put up with because of our public lives. She put up with it for many years. There were good times, but I am sure there were tough times too. Mothers have to work a little extra harder when the father happens to be in public life. She was his rock.

To Alan and Jody's three children Stephanie, Jeff, and Elizabeth, and to their families, to the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren—you can be proud of Alan Dixon. He was truly "the gentleman from Illinois."

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this last weekend in Chicago was memo-

orable—memorable for the wrong reasons. This last weekend in Chicago, gun violence took the lives of 14 people and wounded 82.

I am honored to represent Illinois. I am especially honored to represent a great city such as Chicago. But I am heartbroken to think about what happened this past weekend.

Mayor Emanuel and Superintendent Gary McCarthy anticipated the Fourth of July weekend would be a challenge, and they dispatched hundreds of police to the streets of Chicago in an effort to avert this violence. I wouldn't say they failed, but I would say the tragedy that followed tells us we have a lot of work to do.

I am sure Mayor Emanuel and all of the elected officials in Chicago, including Superintendent McCarthy, are looking over what happened this past weekend trying to think of what they can do to bring peace to the city and end the violence which has taken so many lives. They will be working overtime, and a lot of people will point the finger of blame and say they could have done more. I think the mayor would acknowledge he could have done more. But let me add, we all could have done more. It isn't just the city's responsibility that this kind of violence has occurred. It isn't just the misfortune of the city of Chicago that these lives were lost and that gun violence continues to plague us. It is a responsibility that goes far beyond the city of Chicago. It is a responsibility we have visited on this Chamber, of the Senate.

How can we ignore gun violence in America wherever it occurs—in Chicago, in Washington, DC, across this country? What are we doing as Members of the Senate? What efforts are we making to make America a safer place to live? We have run away from it. We ran away from our responsibility when it comes to an honest, conscientious discussion about gun control.

Some people are frightened of this issue. They think when you get near the Second Amendment, it is the third rail of politics, and that there are gun lobby groups out there just waiting to pounce on any Member who comes to the floor of this Senate and talks about changing our gun laws. That has been the case for a long time, and yet the American people, when you ask them about the basics, get it. They understand you can protect our Second Amendment rights to own and use firearms legally and responsibly and still put reasonable limits in place to keep guns out of the hands of people who will misuse them.

Is there anyone who believes it is an infringement of constitutional rights to say that no one who has been convicted of a felony should be allowed to purchase a firearm in America? That makes sense.

This weekend in Chicago convicted felons were out on the street with firearms firing away. We should do everything in our power to stop that from occurring. After all of the senseless

tragedies which we have seen over the last several years—in Connecticut, in so many different places, even in the State of Illinois—is there anyone who argues with the premise that people who are so mentally unstable they cannot accept the responsibility of a firearm should not be allowed to buy a firearm? Two categories: Convicted felons, mentally unstable people, should not be allowed to purchase firearms in America, period.

We had the vote—a bipartisan vote. Senator JOE MANCHIN of West Virginia is no liberal. Senator MANCHIN is a real conservative and pro-gun. He joined up with Senator PAT TOOMEY of Pennsylvania, who is about as conservative a Republican as you can find. Both Senators MANCHIN and TOOMEY came to the floor and said let us do background checks to make sure convicted felons and people who are mentally unstable cannot purchase a firearm. It failed. It failed because it faced a filibuster we couldn't break. The majority of Senators voted for it, but that wasn't enough because we needed 60 and we didn't have it. We lost a handful of Democrats and we attracted only a few Republicans to support us.

To me, that is not the end of the debate. It is time for us to revisit that issue. It is time for us to have another vote on the floor of the Senate. I am not sure the outcome will be much different, but we owe it to the people of this country to continue this debate, and we owe it as fellow Senators, Democrats and Republicans, to search for solutions.

Let me tell you another measure that could have helped in Chicago and other cities across America. There is a term called straw purchaser. A straw purchaser is someone who will walk into a gun store, present their identification, and purchase a firearm because they are legally entitled to purchase it, and then turn around and give it or sell it to someone who could not legally buy that same gun. Many times it turns out to be the girlfriend who is sent in to make the purchase. It is time to change that law. It is time to send out an all-points bulletin to the girlfriends of thugs that they are going to be sent away to prison for a long time for that kind of irresponsible act. Straw purchasers pass these guns into the community, and when they do, we know what happens: Innocent people die. That is another provision we should vote on on the floor of the Senate.

If there are colleagues who want to stand and defend the right of straw purchasers to buy guns and turn them over to convicted felons, be my guest. I want to hear that debate. Tell me how that is an exercise of your constitutional right. It is not.

I have thousands and thousands of people across Illinois who own firearms, who store them safely, use them legally, and enjoy their rights under the Constitution. Well, what I am suggesting today is not going to change